Interview with Ambassador Charles E. Marthinson

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

AMBASSADOR CHARLES E. MARTHINSEN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy

Initial interview date: July 18, 2003

Q: Today is July 18, 2003. This is an interview with Charles Marthinsen. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. Could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

MARTHINSEN: I was born in Jersey City, New Jersey, on May 18, 1931, one of 4 children. One of my brothers is deceased; I have a remaining brother and a sister. When I was 7, we moved due to my father's work to Erie, Pennsylvania, where I attended public grade school, junior high and high school. I received a scholarship to Gannon University, then Gannon College, in Erie, where I got my BA.

Q: Let's go back a bit. Can you tell me something about your father and his line of the family? Where did they come from?

MARTHINSEN: I've always described our family as typically American. My heritage on my father's side is Norwegian and Swedish and on my mother's side Irish and English. My maternal line can be traced back to the 1600s, to Barnstable County, Massachusetts. Contrasting with that is the fact that my father was born in Norway and emigrated as a

child - he was 7 or to New Jersey where his father, who had moved to the United States earlier, decided to settle.

Q: Do you have any feel about the Norwegian roots of your family, where they came from and why they got out of there?

MARTHINSEN: No, we just joked about it as a family.

Q: What did your father do? Where was he educated?

MARTHINSEN: He was in insurance. He didn't go to college. He worked in New York City as an underwriter. My older brother went into the same business and several of my uncles were also in insurance. This was a major reason why I decided I didn't want to enter that field.

Q: What about your mother's side of the family?

MARTHINSEN: Mother's is the Irish-English heritage. I knew better my maternal grandmother as a child. We lived fairly close to one another in Jersey City. When we moved to Pennsylvania, it meant a trip “out west” for my grandmother, almost every summer.

Q: Where did your mother grow up?

MARTHINSEN: She grew up in Jersey City. Her dad, whom I never met—he died when I was about a year old—had run a tavern and was active in the Democratic Party in New Jersey.

Q: Was this Boss Haig?

MARTHINSEN: Haig was coming along. He later came to dominate the political scene.

Q: The Democratic Party in that area was the archetypical boss type machine.

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes. Of course, you had varying estimates of what contributions or what damage the late mayor Haig did to Jersey City, but my grandmother, for example, found his paternalistic role in politics in Jersey City admirable. He was always prepared to help people, probably largely Irish people, who needed assistance in various wayfinding a job, money of some sort.

Q: The thing about some of the machines was, their great strength was that they delivered.

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes, that's why she admired him.

Q: As opposed to some which seemed more of a kleptocracy. Your mother did not go to college?

MARTHINSEN: No, she went to secretarial school. Catherine Gibbs.

Q: This was the preeminent secretarial school.

MARTHINSEN: She worked for a period of time. When she met my father, she was driving on her own. She married and started having children, and gave up driving. I can remember when my sister and my wife took her for driving lessons to regain her license.

Q: Do you remember the time you were in Jersey City?

MARTHINSEN: I have very fond memories of my childhood there. Mostly, they concerned visits to both my maternal and paternal grandmothers and friends and extended family. A very happy childhood.

Q: When you went to Erie, what was your father doing?

MARTHINSEN: He had joined a firm which is big in Erie and in much of Pennsylvania called the Erie Insurance Exchange. He worked for them for years.

Q: What was Erie like?

MARTHINSEN: It was a grand place for a child to grow up. Lots of parks. It's on Lake Erie. It boasts a state park called the Peninsula. Miles and miles of beaches. Wonderful water sports.

Q: What was home life like? Was there much getting around the dinner table and talking about things?

MARTHINSEN: I have happy memories of a family life that was very warm and enriching. We breakfasted and dined together every day.

Q: Erie's pretty far away when you think about it. All of a sudden, you're basically in the Midwest.

MARTHINSEN: Right.

Q: How about politics in the family? Was there a political thrust to your family?

MARTHINSEN: Both my parents were registered Democrats and I have always been sympathetic to the philosophy of the Democratic Party. Because of their example and the values which they displayed and inculcated in me and my siblings, I remain, perhaps particularly right now, a Democrat.

Q: I was wondering whether politics were a part of your early childhood. Was there family talk about Roosevelt and the New Deal?

MARTHINSEN: Absolutely, there was always talk about what was going on politically. My parents never got involved themselves in politics very much but they followed primaries

and general elections very closely and encouraged us to be interested and discuss what was in the newspaper about this or that politician and what he or she was advocating.

Q: In elementary school, what subjects interested you and didn't interest you?

MARTHINSEN: I can't think of one subject in which I had no interest at all. I was very interested in everything, perhaps particularly in geography and history.

Q: Did you read much?

MARTHINSEN: As much as I could.

Q: Any books that you recall?

MARTHINSEN: From that time, I would be hard-pressed to recall many titles. I received in those days, as most boys did, books on birthdays and at Christmastime like the Rover Boys series and another series that both my older brother and I were very keen on. We collected all those and reread them very much. I remember reading Shame of Motley. by Raphael Sabatini. Similar novels were always interesting to me.

Q: By the time you were about 10, the war came. Were you reading a lot about the war? Did the war engage you?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, very much so. I can recall very vividly December 7th when we were half listening to a radio program and probably reading the Sunday paper and there was the interruption to announce the attack on Pearl Harbor. We were being feisty and my father said, “Listen. Pay attention. This is important to you.” That's when I learned of the war. And then of course, like every American kid, I followed it very, very closely. One New York habit that my parents kept was reading New York newspapers. I think it was the “New York Daily News” which published daily maps that showed the progress of allied and axis forces. I followed those closely.

Q: I had the same thing. Places like Wake Island and Sidi Barani and Rostov really stuck in your mind, the horrible failure of the millions who were killed but for young American boyparticularly boys at that poinit was a great geography lesson.

MARTHINSEN: Oh, indeed. You always prayed that we good guys would win.

Q: We were fixated on maps because of the global nature of the war. Did you get involved in activities young boys would get involved with in Erie during the war?

MARTHINSEN: War-related activities?

Q: Yes.

MARTHINSEN: Yes, we all bought and sold defense savings stamps and bonds. Savings bonds were not an unusual gift for a kid. There were materials that were needed for the war effortinfoil, rubber tires, scrap metal, etc. There were always drives to collect that sort of thing. And there were drives to collect clothing for refugees.

Q: You went to high school in Erie?

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: By the way, in those days, what was Erie doing? I can recall going through there 10 years ago and it's like mile after mile of deserted factories.

MARTHINSEN: Like most of the cities of the northeast, it is part of the extended Rust Belt. When I was a child, all of those factories were turning out everything you can imagine. It was an industrial town with a population of about 114,000. That has been reversed and there has been a flight of both industry and of people from the city to the suburbs so that now my sister, who still lives in Erie, lives in a suburban area which when I was a kid was farmland and is now full of people. That has drained the life of the city. As a matter of fact, I don't get back there that often, but several buildings that were identified with the town

have been demolished and there is kind of a suburbanization of the core urban areas. On what had been the main shopping street, I don't think there is a single department store left now. They're all out in surrounding malls.

Q: You were in high school from '43 to when?

MARTHINSEN: To '49. It was junior high school and senior high school. I know that fashions change. It used to be 7th, 8th, and 9th grade for junior high and 10th, 11th, and 12th for senior high.

Q: What was the student body like? Was it diverse?

MARTHINSEN: Pretty diverse. There were not that many black students at school. The black population of Erie tended to live on the eastern part of the city. I went to a school called Academy High. Then there was also an East High, a Strong Vincent High, and a Central Technical High School. In Academy, there were just a very few blacks, but there was no problem racially that I can remember.

Q: In junior high and high school, what subjects attracted you?

MARTHINSEN: My attraction continued for history/ political science, geography (which was then taught seriously as a subject)... Starting in 7th grade, I took Latin and then later Spanish. I often remember wishing that my father had maintained his Norwegian. He could until he died read letters from family in Norwegian, but his spoken Norwegian had disappeared. I'm not sure I ever felt that way about Gaelic because it was not as big a deal among the Irish.

Q: For a lot of the Irish, Gaelic was also kind of a dead language.

MARTHINSEN: If you go to Ireland, you'll see there are very few areas where they speak Gaelic.

Q: Mainly on the west coast.

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: Did you get involved in extracurricular activities?

MARTHINSEN: I was never a great sportsman, though I tried my hand at and played badly tennis and later golf. But I was not a runner nor a swimmer. I never made a team.

Q: How about dramatics?

MARTHINSEN: I got into a few plays. I don't think my presence on the American stage has been missed, but I enjoyed it and the good company involved. In high school, I enjoyed debate. We had a very extensive schedule for interschool debates and then state finals and regional finals. That was fun and a good way to get to know other students.

Q: How about jobs? Did you have summer jobs?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. When we were growing up, we lived next to a family that had a small milk processing and distributing plant. They always needed help. Like my brother before me, I learned how to wash milk bottles, which were of glass in those days and were returned to the plant to be washed and refilled. Without understanding very much about it, we watched the homogenization process and the bottling of milk. I had other jobs like delivering newspapers.

Q: While you were in high school, were you pointed towards college?

MARTHINSEN: My parents always assumed that we would all go to college and encouraged us in that direction. Whenever grades came out, they'd say, “This would be good for your college aspirations... or not so good.”

Q: Were you a good student?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, I was. I took great pride in it.

Q: When you were finishing in '49, what sort of college were you thinking about and where did you apply?

MARTHINSEN: Gannon University is a fairly new school. It began as Cathedral College in the late 1920s. It had just been reorganized as Gannon College and was beginning to expand as a community school.

Q: This was in Erie?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. Gannon produced a quiz program hosted by one of its great professors, now deceased, Gordon Beyer. In it, questions about world and Pennsylvania history were addressed to panels of students. After I went through a series of competitions with other students from various local schools, I won a 4 year full tuition scholarship to Gannon, which was pretty great. Financially, that was very helpful. At the same time, we had in Pennsylvania state senatorial scholarships. I won one of those, too. The two grants covered much of the expense of my attending college.

Q: What was the school like in those days?

MARTHINSEN: Gannon was an interesting experience and I think very good for those of us who had just graduated from high school. The GI Bill was still in effect and we had a fair number of veterans attending while I was there. These were older, experienced students, but they were a tremendous addition to classroom discussions. The faculty was talented and diverse, home-grown and imported.

Q: What courses did you concentrate on?

MARTHINSEN: I bet you could guess. My interest in political science focused at the time on the creation and development of the UN. Also, American politics were, as always, endlessly fascinating.

Q: Later, you ended up in the Middle East. Did that cross your radar at all?

MARTHINSEN: Not a hint of it. When I was first assigned abroad as an FSO, it was to Dacca in East Pakistan, now Bangladesh. I had studied Spanish in high school and I has taken a few excellent courses in college. I did reasonably well on the FSI language exam in Spanish, but I knew that I needed time in an environment where Spanish was spoken in order to really acquire the language. So, I outsmarted myself. At that time, the Department was very interested in attracting people to Arabic language and area studies. I wrote to Personnel and said, “I've been thinking about Arabic language and area studies and in order to confirm my interest, I would like to be assigned to Spain, where I could perfect my Spanish and, of course, have a glimpse at North African Arab world.” In less than 2 weeks, I got a message back saying that “Your application for Arabic language and area studies has been accepted.”

Q: The '48 birth of Israel and all that didn't resonate at all?

MARTHINSEN: It did, not the least because two of Gannon's faculty members were rabbis. The archbishop for whom the university was named was very interested in ecumenical efforts and wanted to expose the students to as many diverse points of view as possible. I don't think there were very many Arabs, much less Muslims, in the US at that time. I don't recall any on the faculty. But learning about the Middle East from these Americans of the Jewish faith inclined me to sympathize with the supporters of Israel. I was not very discriminating. While I believe that we're hardly in a position as Americans to hurl many stones, the Israelis have been pretty much in the business of taking other people's land and settling it. That has been my conclusion.

Q: But at that time, this was something you had heard about.

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes, but in terms of plucky Israel, a democratic state fighting for its very existence against the massed hordes of the surrounding Arab countries That was all the press, the radio and television had to say.

Q: Did you get involved in any other extracurricular things in college?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. We had a campus newspaper which I edited. I was a member of the International Relations Club and the Intercollegiate Conference on Government. At that time, there were no fraternities on campus. Though I was a complete washout in sports, I enjoyed collegiate life. I learned how to drink beer and important stuff like that.

Q: Was the school coeducational?

MARTHINSEN: At that time, no, it was not. It has since become coeducational with the merger of Gannon University and Villa Maria College.

Q: Where did the students at Gannon in those days go for feminine solace?

MARTHINSEN: Fortunately, there were lots of good looking girls from our high school days.

Q: You were going to be graduating in about 1953?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, that was the plan, However, the Korean War was raging; the army was using up second lieutenants at a ferocious rate; Uncle Sam needed more. ROTC was compulsory for Gannon students who were not veterans. I took Military Science as one of my mandatory courses and attended summer camp at Fort Gordon (then Camp Gordon) in Georgia. In those days, campuses around the country specialized in different branches. Gannon's was MPs. Can you imagine? Summer in Georgia for infantry training? It was grim, but in a way it prepared me for the Middle East. Then our graduation was moved up

by six months; we had to go to summer school. I graduated in January, was immediately sworn into the army, and went back to Fort Gordon for a stint of training. I was then transferred to Fort Monroe, Virginia to the 559th Military Police Company. Traffic control and running a guard house were our chief missions during that period of a year or so. Then the war in Korea ended and the need for additional second lieutenants slackened. A lot of us, including me, were released from service earlier than we had expected we would be. I had served just under 2 years.

Q: Did police work interest you?

MARTHINSEN: Not very much, though it was interesting to work with a variety of people from high-ranking officers to minimum security prisoners whom we employed to maintain the appearance of the post. A captain commanded and there were 2 second lieutenants who shared responsibility for running the guardhouse and running traffic control and security operations.

Q: What was Fort Monroe doing at that time?

MARTHINSEN: Headquarters of Continental Army command. I have not followed up on military organizations as assiduously as I might have, so I don't know what it is today. But in those days, it was kind of neat because we were, say, 10-12 first and second lieutenants and there were 10-12 general officers. There were platoons of full colonels and light colonels, and a sprinkling of majors and captains. The senior officers on post had families, including some very attractive girls, and that made for an interesting and pleasurable social life.

Q: That was where Jefferson Davis was kept, wasn't it?

MARTHINSEN: He was imprisoned there in 1865-67.

Q: I was there in March with a Civil War group. It's now one of the Defense Universities' homes. It's got a training facility. Troops aren't drilling all over the place.

MARTHINSEN: They were not drilling all over the place when I was there either. It supported a major command. With so many senior military army officers, there were many retirements. I don't know what the rule was, but apparently many army officers who had the rank of colonel and who were going to retire would get to have a final parade plus a B.G.'s star. Scratching together enough soldiers who would make a soldierly appearance for retirement parades was a chore. Our MPs were always splendid-looking with nifty uniforms. Then there was the Transportation Car Company; they were not the most soldierly guys. And then there were casuals—enlisted personnel who were cooks and clerks and that sort of thing. There was also a gaggle of WACs, female soldiers. You try to form a parade with such a cast. It was all I could do to keep a straight face.

Q: While you were protecting the United States from the North Korean hordes at Fort Monroe in Virginia, what were you thinking about doing after you'd completed this task?

MARTHINSEN: I thought at that time that I wanted to go to law school. When I was in college, I worked part-time for a wonderful gentleman, a lawyer in Erie, named Jackson Enean. He planted the seed of a Foreign Service career in my head. When we chatted, and we often did, he suggested that he would have loved to have been a Foreign Service officer and serve his country abroad. The more he talked about what might have been for him, the more attractive it seemed to me. So, rather than applying to law school, after my army service I applied to and was accepted by Georgetown University for their Foreign Service exam cram course. The course was basically a quick review of everything you had learned when you were in college. I came down to Washington and lived on 17th Street and Massachusetts Avenue.

Q: This would be in '55?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. Then I took the Foreign Service exam in Buffalo and received word that I had succeeded. In those days, you had to take the written exam and oral exam as well as pass a physical.

Q: It's still the same. Was it still a 3 day exam?

MARTHINSEN: I didn't stay over in Buffalo where the written exam was offered.

Q: Then you took the oral exam. Where did you take it?

MARTHINSEN: At FSI in Arlington when FSI was part of what is now a huge residential...

Q: Arlington Towers, in the basement, actually in the garage.

MARTHINSEN: That's right.

Q: They just partitioned it off and said, "It's not a parking garage. It's the Foreign Service Institute."

MARTHINSEN: And it passed reasonably well for an institute.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions on the oral exam?

MARTHINSEN: No, I don't.

Q: When did you come into the Foreign Service?

MARTHINSEN: 1955 in December.

Q: Do you recall the composition of the A100 course and how it went?

MARTHINSEN: It went very well indeed. My classmates were mostly men; there were few women. I never served with any of them; we all went our different ways. I suppose most

tended to specialize in particular areas, as it turned out I would. I read with interest in the “Journal” and other notifications about the doings of my classmates. In those days, the A100 course included a trip to New York, which I remember very clearly.

Q: Did you go on board ships?

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: I came in in '55. I remember going to the Andrea Doria. Did you stay at the Seaman's Rest?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, downtown, lower Manhattan.

Q: It was an interesting place. I guess you saw the UN?

MARTHINSEN: We did.

Q: While you were the FSI, did you get a feeling for what you wanted to do, where you wanted to go?

MARTHINSEN: No, I was game for anything. I had done pretty well in my life thus far just rolling with the punches. I had decided to try for the Foreign Service and I had succeeded in that; I was prepared to take any assignment that came my way. I was very naive and hideously uninformed about geographic and cultural climates around the world. I had never investigated, for example, the subcontinent very closely. Therefore, I was mystified when, at the end of our A100 course, they were reading aloud names the assignments. I was assigned to Dacca, East Pakistan. There was a sharp intake of breath from my fellows because Dacca had a well deserved reputation for being a trying assignment given the climate and amenities or lack thereof.

Q: Then you went out to Dacca in 1956?

MARTHINSEN: '57. I was broken out of the A100 course that I had started with and along with one other officer was loaned to the predecessor of AID, ECA/ TCA. I went to work in the Near East, South Asia Program Division (NESA). Cedric Seager was the director. I worked for a lady named Marie Berger, a Chicagoan, and a very admirable boss and friend. Then at the end of that assignment, which was mostly spent in preparing congressional presentations, I returned to FSI.

Q: Then they put you back in?

MARTHINSEN: Then I rejoined the ongoing A100 course.

Q: You went to Dacca when?

MARTHINSEN: In '57.

Q: And you were there until when?

MARTHINSEN: Until '59.

Q: Was Stocky Everetts there?

MARTHINSEN: No, he was in Karachi.

Q: He came in with me in my A100 course. You must have been class 5 or 6. We were class one.

MARTHINSEN: My boss in Dacca was William “Bill” Williams, an experienced FSO. He was succeeded by Nathaniel King, an LBJ appointee and a prince of a guy.

Q: When you were in Dacca this '57 to '59 period, what was Dacca like?

MARTHINSEN: My father-in-law-to-be painted for relaxation and turned out some rather skillful paintings more or less in the Grandma Moses style, American primitive. And he has

“A View of Nawabpur Road” which still hangs on a wall at our house. That's what Dacca was like; chockablock full of pedicabs and cattle and ladies in various stages of being enveloped in burkas and saris and children and birds. Dacca was a mob scene most of the time. Of course, Bangladesh at that time had half the population that it has today. It was considered by AID experts to be heavily overpopulated. When I first went there, sanitation was a problem. Death rates from cholera and smallpox were extraordinarily high. If the death rate did not exceed 500 in a given week, then there was no “epidemic.” Annually 10,000 people or so would die in floods. Just a few inches rise of water meant a disaster.

Q: Did you experience floods while you were there?

MARTHINSEN: None that affected us in Dacca, but they occurred frequently in other parts of the province. The demand for agricultural land is so great that, as islands of silt appeared in the various rivers, they were immediately turned to farm lands. Such lands were a very dangerous place to live. They could be swept away in the next highly predictable floods. India was building a great barrage north of Calcutta about the time I left. That was supposed to permit some flood control. I hope that has happened, although from what I've read, the Bengalis are still dying from other inundations.

Q: What was the government like? It was part of Pakistan.

MARTHINSEN: There was a governor general in Dacca. In my day, it was Faslul Haq.

Q: What was your job there?

MARTHINSEN: I was economic/commercial officer in Dacca. Max Hodge headed the two man office. Mostly we kept track of jute production. I never knew there were so many grades of jute. In those days, the industry was pretty much as the Brits had organized it. We were also following the transportation sector. River transport was extremely important in Bangladesh.

Q: Where does jute come from in East Pakistan?

MARTHINSEN: It is grown in all of the watery bottomlands; the province is mostly watery bottomlands. You don't get into hills in Bangladesh until you go down to the Chittagong area or Sylhet north central part—that's tea country. The rest of it is like a billiard table after a night of carousing: flat, green, and wet.

Q: This hemp, could this be used for narcotic purposes?

MARTHINSEN: Not that I know of. Jute is more comparable more to cotton. The business of grading it and processing it or semi-processing it and manufacturing cloth and rugs was the major economic activity.

Q: I hope you had a local employee who knew what was going on.

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes, our Foreign Service would not exist if it were not for skilled local employees. I had an aide who was terrific. He also was my translator although, happily, many Bengalis spoke English, particularly those in the jute trade and transportation.

Q: What was the consulate general like?

MARTHINSEN: The consulate general—now an embassy— up until very recently was the same as it was when I was there. The office was within sight of the former Nawab's palace in Motajeel. We were on 4th and 5th or 5th and 6th floors of the Adamjeenagar, a new and relatively, but not totally, watertight building. It was a glass-domed office building that housed State and AID.

Q: Did you get any feeling for the Bangladeshi or East Bengali relationship with the Pakistanis? I'm thinking of the people from West Pakistan?

MARTHINSEN: Absolutely. West Pakistanis speak a different language. Mohammed Ali Jinnah had organized the Pakistan government and chose Karachi as the capital. I think

most East Pakistanis believed that they made the money and the West Pakistanis took a commission. The major export of Pakistan was raw jute. I don't even think much of it was processed.

Q: Was anybody there looking at this as maybe the sea of a rebellion?

MARTHINSEN: Unfortunately, the division of Pakistan into the provinces fostered political difficulties. The sole glue holding the country together was Islam. Fortunately when I was there, there was no serious violence. Though when martial law was declared by Karachi, it had a big effect on East Bengal. A lot of Pushtus, Baluchis, Sindhis and others from the west, came into Dacca to take over the newly created military administration. That turned off the local populace because it meant the end of self-government. Ethnic tensions grew. Prior to martial law, Bengalis had their own parliament and all of the Bengalis followed the affairs of their legislative assembly closely.

Q: Were you able to make friends with people there?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, very easily. The people with whom I had most of my contacts were in the economic departments of the East Pakistan government or in the private business community. Most spoke English. As was true in much of ex-India, they were carrying on pretty much as they had during the days of the Raj. There was no interruption in the flow of jute, much less of mangos and bananas and other products that were traded.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

MARTHINSEN: The story I tell is that I was minding my own business walking through the jungle one day when this gorgeous creature swung down from the trees and glommed onto me. That is not quite true. My father- in-law-to-be was a staff member at the consulate general, working in political affairs. Kate was then 18 or 19. . . I was much younger, too, in those days. She was off at school. Initially she had been sent to school

in India and then she started university. She was taking a year at Louvain in Belgium and came back on leave. I met her when she was back home in Dacca for vacation.

Q: When did you get married?

MARTHINSEN: We got married in November 1959.

Q: In Dacca?

MARTHINSEN: No, we wanted to make sure it held. In the interim, her parents, Herb and Margaret Hooker were transferred. They went to Rome. Kate and I by then were destined to strike out together, so we thought, “Rome isn't bad for a wedding. We can make do.” My future mother-in-law arranged for the wedding at the Vatican. We were married in the Choir Chapel on November 2, 1959, just after my tour had ended in Dacca and I was headed back home and on to my next post, Beirut. Kate had encouraged me saying, “You're going to love Beirut. You're going to love Lebanon and the Arab world.” She had lived for 5 or 7 years as a kid in Cairo. So, I was marrying a “Bint Al-Balad”— “a daughter of the country.”

Q: So you studied Arabic in Beirut for how long?

MARTHINSEN: It was a 2 year course.

Q: This would be '59 to '61.

MARTHINSEN: No, I didn't get there until '60. We were married in November. In those days, one could return to the United States or go to a posting abroad by ship. That tracked out nicely for us and our honeymoon. We sailed to New York and were met in New York City by my parents. It was a great experience except that my bride did not turn out to be as good a sailor as she had thought she was. It was kind of a rough ride.

Q: What was Beirut like when you got there?

MARTHINSEN: Beirut was wonderful, incredible. I found out how right Kate had been. We loved it. We loved our experience in a very cosmopolitan city. Our sole problem was getting Lebanese to speak Arabic with us because they were so gifted linguistically. They could carry on a conversation in English or French or probably Turkish or Armenian at the drop of a hat, which we found exhilarating. It was a city where you could turn right and go for dinner a la francais or turn left and go for Arab cuisine in an Arabic milieu. It was wonderful. AUB was going great guns in those days. It was fairly enjoyable.

Q: How did you take to Arabic?

MARTHINSEN: I took to it rather well. I was helped, of course, by Kate's experience in Egypt. She would speak to me in Arabic and others would, too. Mastering differences in sounds took a lot of practice in front of a mirror. By the end of the course I could converse with people from most Arabic language countries pretty well, especially if they were educated. I could recognize the differences in accents. We say “Arabic,” but there is a big difference between Beiruti Arabic and Mountain Arabic in Lebanon. It differs too from Damascus Arabic—which is just a couple of hours' drive away, which has an accent different from Aleppo, which is different in turn from that of Amman or Palestine. All are different from Najdi or Hejazi Arabic. Egyptian to a non-Arab sounds almost like a different language because of the different pronunciations and, often, vocabulary differences.

Q: Who were some of your fellow students?

MARTHINSEN: Dick Murphy and Morris Draper overlapped with us a year or so. Kent Whitehead. George Lane.

Q: How was Lebanon at the time? In '58, it had gone through an incipient civil war. We put troops in there for a while.

MARTHINSEN: It had become an amusing memory for most Beirutis. Many who recalled the landing were swimming that day at the beach. “What are all these ships doing here?”

they asked. They directed the troops towards the Coke and ice cream vendors. Robert McClintock was the ambassador and people still tell stories about his coming in with the troops with his poodle dog in tow. That excited much comment among Beirut. But they were otherwise tremendously relaxed about it. It was nothing like the bitterness that accompanied the violence in '74.

Q: Did you get any feel for the influence of Nasser?

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes, his influence had extended throughout the Arab world. In those days, FSI sent its language and area trainees on an area orientation trip. Our trip included visits to Syria, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Israel, and Jordan. It was a truly wonderful experience.

Q: Where did you go?

MARTHINSEN: To all those places. We were on a military aircraft. The order was different. I think we started out in Turkey, but then we went to all those countries. It was a very rewarding experience that really introduced us to the region.

Q: One of the accusations that has been put forward is that State Department trained Arabists are ipso facto anti-Semitic and against Israel.

MARTHINSEN: That's horse feathers. Arabs are Semites, too. I'm afraid that we are heavily prejudiced towards the Israelis as a nation and as a people and I think that the Israelis nurture that prejudice very, very, very successfully regardless of the cost not to the Israeli treasury, but to the U.S. Treasury. That has been probably the greatest disappointment in my professional life.

Q: Obviously it's a major problem. But were you feeling any of that? What were you getting about Israel?

MARTHINSEN: We got from Department sources sort of praise, honor, and glory to the plucky Israeli democrats and all that business, whereas Zionists were busily establishing a theocratic state on the remains of the Indian reservations which were left to the Palestinian people. The Lebanese and others in the region had perhaps understandable sympathy for their mostly coreligionists in what was left of Palestine. The villains in the peace were the British. They and the French had diddled the Arab nationalists to a fare-thee-well in the wake of World War I and then proceeded not only to divide up the region into the states, which we pretty much know today, but also to promise the same land to British Zionists as they promised to the Arabs.

Q: The Balfour Declaration.

MARTHINSEN: That's right. That's turning a good trick: Give away to others what is not yours to give.

Q: Did one see that if you dealt in the Arab world, you couldn't serve in Israel?

MARTHINSEN: No, because there were officers who did serve in both. If you were an Arabist or an Hebraist, you wanted to use your Arabic or Hebrew and so you wanted to be in an Arab country or in Israel. Of course, it wouldn't be a big recommendation if you came straight from Tel Aviv to Beirut or Damascus.

Q: What were you picking up from your fellow officers and others at the embassy about Egypt and Nasser? How did you see Nasserism at that point?

MARTHINSEN: Mostly as understandable. Much of the Western world, certainly London and Paris, were upset by the nationalization of the Suez Canal and the RCC revolution in Egypt. Very few people had much sympathy or understanding for Farouk and the fall of his dynasty. In my recollection, there was a similar amount of popular sympathy for the Mossadegh revolution, later crushed in Teheran. The monarchical system hadn't shown much in either country. I know that Nasser had a great rallying effect on Arab nationalists

who wanted to change the status quo. But that is the story of all revolutions, as it was the story of our revolution.

Q: It was only 2 years after the overthrow of Faisal and Iraq. It was July 14th of '58. How was that looked upon, the emergence of the Baath Party and all that?

MARTHINSEN: That's a very interesting subject to discuss. Even as we speak, we're determined that we'd like to see a US sponsored regime emerge in Iraq that would be democratic. I've even heard the word “secular” used. Fat chance of running into a secular regime in the Middle East. But if that is desirable, then the Baath Party as it was originally construed, largely by Michel Aflaq, a Syrian Christian, and which sought to erect a wall of separation between mosque and state, was a positive development. I'm not sure we're following the right course in blaming everything on Baathism and the Baath Party. Saddam Hussein, like his Syrian counterparts, has over the years twisted Baathi doctrine to suit his own purposes. But there has always been a strain of secularism in the movement. Actually, until and unless that happens, the Middle East is going to be cursed... if you believe as I do that theocracies are a curse.

Q: I want to go back to 1960-1962. How did we look at Iraq? Were you getting anything?

MARTHINSEN: You mean '58 and the fall of the monarchy?

Q: I mean what happened thereafter.

MARTHINSEN: After a while, one grew accustomed to coups in Baghdad. I visited the city, which was quite an experience. Very disagreeable, very challenging climate to deal with. It seems to me that whether it was one of the Aref brothers or it was Abdul Karim Kassem or anyone else, it was more of the same.

Q: The rulers that Iraq ended up with seemed to be a pretty nasty lot.

MARTHINSEN: It's all very relative. Saddam Hussein was nothing to write home about: he has a singularly disagreeable character and is very cruel. But he shared that with many others, and not just Arabs, but other people who have less than high regard for their fellow citizens.

Q: As you were coming out of this language training, where were you thinking in the Arab world you wanted to concentrate?

MARTHINSEN: No. Having worked rather hard for two years, I just wanted to go to any Arab country to try to perfect my language. This was before I really appreciated the differences among the dialects. My first tour after training was in Jeddah in Saudi Arabia. I thought, “This is very close to the heart of the Arab world and it should be very good.” And it was very good. Jeddah in those days was a pretty sophisticated city with a variety of peoples, Muslims certainly, but from all parts of the Arab world. It was an interesting experience. And Saudi society was fascinating.

Q: You were in Jeddah from when to when?

MARTHINSEN: From '62 to '64.

Q: What was the government like in Saudi Arabia when you got there?

MARTHINSEN: Then crown prince Faisal Bin Abd Al-Aziz was the power behind the throne. King Saud Bin Abd Al-Aziz was being eased out of the picture.

Q: What was your job?

MARTHINSEN: Jeddah waand it was the embassy then; there was nothing in Riyadh—a small political section. I handled consular affairs and helped with reporting on political developments. Very little in the Saudi media was reportable. This was well before “Al Jazeera” came on to blow the whistle on various Arab governments and personalities. We

had good contacts with the ministry of foreign affairs, which was collocated in Jeddah. The rest of the government was in Riyadh, which I visited only a couple of times; American oil company personnel were more common in Riyadh than were U.S. diplomats. Even the ambassador went to Riyadh only occasionally.

Q: Who was our ambassador when you were there?

MARTHINSEN: Parker Hart.

Q: He was an Arabist.

MARTHINSEN: Yes. He spoke limited Arabic.

Q: He was Turkish, too. What were some of the issues that concerned the embassy and you yourself?

MARTHINSEN: As has been the case in the Middle East for half a century, there was always the threat of war related to the Arab-Israeli dispute. And there was a growing tension between Riyadh and Cairo. While we were in Saudi Arabia, the Yemen civil war broke out, and the Saudis were backing the Imam's forces and Gamal Abdel Nasser was supporting the Yemeni republican forces.

Q: They put quite a few troops down there.

MARTHINSEN: Yes. The large Egyptian Expeditionary Force, which kind of tilted the fighting towards the republicans. The Yemeni royalists wounded were brought up to Jeddah for medical treatment. Interesting story there. A Lebanese physician who was on the staff of the hospital in Jeddah said it was extraordinary how when they'd bring in someone with a really serious wound, you could see the wound heal itself even as you watched. Yemeni children who survive childhood build up such immunities that they're enormously hardy. Well, having said that, they still died and so did republicans. That led in

time to overflights of Saudi soil by Egyptian aircraft and the threat of war. The whole affair was a struggle for influence between the Saudis and the Egyptians.

Q: Did you have much contact with Saudis outside the office?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, we did. There were a fair number of Saudis who had studied in the United States and who were interested in socializing with Americans. The Saudi social system afforded opportunities for wives, too, to join in dinners and parties of various kinds.

Q: How did that work?

MARTHINSEN: Beautifully.

Q: Did the Saudi wives sit down at the table with the men?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, but a lot of the wives were not Saudis. They were Lebanese, Syrian, Egyptian, and often Western. Saudis often married foreign, more liberated women.

Q: Were we looking at all at some of the internal developments in Saudi Arabia which lately have come to our attention in rather dramatic form? I'm thinking particularly of the school system where the ruling party apparently turned over the school system to this religious Wahhabi side of things.

MARTHINSEN: The Saudi schools have always been subject to the influence of the Wahhabi movement, which is, after all, the religious persuasion of the royal family and which has had an alliance with the House of Saud since the 1700s. Wahhabism represents a main prop of the kingdom. Koranic schools (madrasas), are all under the influence of the Wahhabi movement. Remember that while I was in Jeddah, the first ever royal prince to get a degree from an American university graduated; it was kind of the beginning of what you might call the development of a modernizing elite and they obviously still have a long way to go. At the time, there were a number of other Saudis who had been to the United States and Europe who hoped for the modernization of the

country and gradual change. They were mostly the kids of prominent commercial families in Jeddah so far as I could tell.

Q: Going back to this time, did you get any feel for ARAMCO and its influence?

MARTHINSEN: Absolutely. Among our best personal friends in Jeddah were the ARAMCO rep. and his wife, Clark and Mary Sipher. They retired later in California. Clark ran a 3-man office in Jeddah. ARAMCO had an office in Riyadh and their main office in Dhahran, with which the consulate dealt, in the Eastern Province. ARAMCO was enormously influential. But also while we were there the great shift towards Saudi ownership of oil production facilities began. Concession arrangements were replaced by state ownership. That change seems to have worked out reasonably well.

I tell you what was really a major event while we were in Saudi Arabia. That was the assassination of President Kennedy. Saudis showed at that time the most moving sympathy for our country.

Q: It was interesting how this affected all over the world. I was in a communist country at the time, Yugoslavia, and people were lined up... It was really something.MARTHINSEN: Yes, it was.

Q: Were we looking at the Palestinian influence in Saudi Arabia? Palestinians were very much like the Chinese in Indonesia running many things. Was this a concern?

MARTHINSEN: Not that I can remember. It seemed to me that the Saudis kept a pretty close control on all non-Saudi Arabs. Palestinians were influential. Their ambitions, desires, and feelings were, as you might expect them to be, at odds with ours regarding the Middle East. But otherwise so far as I know, they mostly performed their jobs as teachers, administrators, businessmen, doctors etc. The business arrangements were usually in the form of a partnership with a Saudi national who was responsible for them and how they behaved. They were a kind of leavening agent in Saudi society. By and

large, Palestinians were better educated and more sophisticated than the Saudis, who were just getting started... When I was there, the very first girls' school ever in the kingdom was opened.

Q: You were also there before the great influx of labor from the Philippines and Indonesia and Bangladesh and all.

MARTHINSEN: That influx had started; the word was out that Filipinas were marvelous nannies. I think that maybe a major task imposed on the Saudi diplomats around the world was to keep an eye out for good nannies, chauffeurs, nurses, etc.

Q: How were we seeing Saudi Arabia developing? Were we looking for a successor to the House of Saud?

MARTHINSEN: As usual, I think we were inclined to want to have our cake and eat it, too. We wanted what we call “stability” and yet we wanted secularism and progressive democracy. But they don't always work together and you can't make an omelet without breaking an egg, as we have experienced in our history. Other countries go through the same thing. That's a very interesting question which you can attack at several levels. You get down to the basic level and that is the philosophy of the people involved. Theocracies and democracies and that sort of thing... There has always been a concern that there might be a revolution in Saudi Arabia; we were very conscious of the possibility of that. But as far as I can remember in my day, there were no hints of serious dissent anywhere, no Shia-Sunni conflicts, at least that we heard about. There were always questions about the regimes in power in Sanaa or Aden. One of the last shifts of sovereignty over a chunk of the Middle East— after the Brits and the French had divvied up most of the Middle East—was the Asir province, the southernmost province of the Hejaz, which the Saudis seized from Yemen in the '20s. There was always concern that an effort to reunify Asir with Yemen might occur, but nothing ever came of that.

Q: What about along the Persian Gulf area? Were they having problems with the British as a surrogate, at that time the Trucial States over the Buraimi Oasis?

MARTHINSEN: The Gulf Emirates of the lower Gulf in '61 joined into what is today an expanded Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The UAE took form in about '61. That was the same year in which Qatar and Bahrain received independence. They were originally going to join in that confederation but they opted out with, I think, Qatar following Bahrain's lead.

Q: While you were in Jeddah, the subject of Israel and American relations with Israel must have come up all the time.

MARTHINSEN: Yes, it always does. It always will.

Q: How did you deal with it?

MARTHINSEN: I would try to explain the reasons for American sympathy for Zionist aspirations in Israel and the fact that the American Congress and most American political leaders were not only sympathetic towards the Israelis but also sympathetic towards the Palestinians and interested in working out a solution to the Palestine problem. I believe that I never made it to first base.

Q: Of course, this was before the '67 war and the acquisition of the West Bank, which exacerbated everything.

MARTHINSEN: You bet. We left Saudi Arabia and went to Damascus in 1964.

Q: You went to Damascus in '64.

MARTHINSEN: '64 to '67. We left in the spring of '67 to the sound of Syrian jets being shot down by Israeli fighter aircraft south of the city and a pretty strong suspicion that it was all going to hit the fan pretty soon. Tensions had been developing for over a year.

Q: Let's go to Damascus in '64. How was your Arabic by this time?

MARTHINSEN: By that time, it was pretty good. It was pretty good Hejazi Arabic. Then I had to learn how to sing Arabic in the Damascus manner. That was another good experience. Syrians we found very friendly and welcoming and much more relaxed as a society.

Q: What was the government at that point?

MARTHINSEN: It was pre-Baathi. It was a military dictatorship with the trappings of democracy. While we were there, the Baathi coup occurred.

Q: What was your job at the embassy?

MARTHINSEN: I was an economic/AID officer. It was an interesting marriage of an AID office and State econ. under a counselor of embassy, AID's John Tobler. There were Norm Pratt, the economic officer and on the AID side, John Moore. I worked for both of them. We had a number of AID programs going on with the Syrians and we were interested in the economic life and developments in the country.

Q: What was the economic life like then?

MARTHINSEN: It was pretty good. The standard of living in Syria was quite reasonable by Middle Eastern standards. The people whom we tended to meet and associate with were home-owning, car-owning, traveling businesspeople. While we were there, there was a series of nationalizations of industry, which presented big problems for many of these people.

Q: Syria has some elements making it, if not a wealthy, a moderately economically viable state.

MARTHINSEN: Absolutely.

Q: They had good crops and were training people and all of this and yet... How was that working out?

MARTHINSEN: I think the economy has never really faltered. It took some serious hits at the time of the nationalizations but from all I've read and heard, they weathered that and worked out a bureaucratic solution to the problem. Agriculture has almost always been very healthy. Production is mostly for the domestic market; they don't get involved in much exporting. Maybe a bit to Iraq and perhaps to Turkey. The most serious problem that the Syrians faced and still face—nothing ever changes in the Middle East—is that there is a kind of folk memory or ambition or idea that historic Syria has a claim to legitimacy. Historic Syria is today's Syria plus Hatay, which the Turks seized when the French were ruling Damascus—the chunk of Turkey that dips down into Syria; Lebanon, which we hear about from time to time; And Palestine, that is Palestine including Jordan. These were all parts of the Ummayad Empire and, earlier, of the realm of the Selucids, heirs of Alexander. That is historic or greater Syria. They think still that those areas should belong to Damascus. I think that's their problem and may account for the special relationship between Syria and Lebanon as well as the problem of what's left of Palestine.

Q: How did you find Damascus and Syrian society? Could you get around? Was it a problem?

MARTHINSEN: After the coup, it was much more of a problem because the society kind of closed down. Prior to that, it reminded one a bit of Beirut, very open and rather free notwithstanding the nature of the government. There were a lot of Syrians who had language skills other than Arabic, had traveled widely in Europe and the United States, and had business ties with the US. It was very comfortable living.

Q: Prior to the coup, how about Soviet influence? Was this a big deal?

MARTHINSEN: The Soviet presence was quite large, more so after the coup. Moscow financed some major development projects such as the Euphrates Dam and some power work. Most of the military equipment that the Syrians imported came from the Soviet Union. At the same time, during our stint in Damascus, the Soviets mounted a “Be kind to Americans” campaign. They encouraged contacts between their embassy staff and our's. We were told by the ambassador we should respond and if we should feel so inclined, we should reciprocate their overtures. I remember hosting a carefully contrived dinner part at our house. We invited my Soviet counterpart and his wife. The only thing that was mildly disturbing was that an additional Soviet came along I guess to watch over us—a minder, perhaps.

Q: Let's talk about the coup. What was the situation before the coup and how did the coup happen and what were we doing during this?

MARTHINSEN: It was a power struggle between competing groups of officers.

Q: The Baaths were not in power at this point?

MARTHINSEN: No, not as a party. When the French withdrew from Damascus, they left in place a rather feeble parliamentary regime which was soon overthrown—there have been so many coups d'etat in Damascus over the years, I've lost track. In any event, it swiftly turned into a kind of colonel's rule: military dictators took over. So far as we could tell, there was a rising sense of vexation with military rule; not infrequently military officers don't view the world as other people do. So it was a competition between factions within the military, one or another abetted by the Baath party, which had an organization with cells throughout the society. Literally they ended up fighting with tanks and infantry in the streets of Damascus. Thinking they were having one of their regular coups d'etats, most of our Damascus neighbors, very nice people, invited us to come up on the roof and see the action going on. One of the senior officers didn't realize he was being ousted from power; he held out when his house was attacked by tanks just a few blocks away. So there was a

very exciting artillery duel to witness. By dawn another regime emerged. It was military and pro-Baathi.

Q: You were doing what in Damascus?

MARTHINSEN: I was doing the routine State Economic/Commercial reporting and backstopping my AID co-boss.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

MARTHINSEN: Two. Ridgway Knight was there when we first arrived. Hugh Smythe, a political appointee, succeeded Knight. Smythe was an experienced educator.

Q: But did they have any feel for the situation? Or was there much that could be done there outside of Washington.

MARTHINSEN: It was pretty hopeless. The Syrians had to decide who they were, what they wanted, and where they were going on their own. As you recall, they united with Egypt for a few years.

Q: The United Arab Republic.

MARTHINSEN: Yes. That was a serious development that reflected the desires of many politically conscious , patriotic Syrians who could submerge their Syrian identity for the sake of a union of the Arabs. There has always been this romantic idea that all Arabs starting from their homeland in what is today Saudi Arabia all across North Africa to the Sudan and east along the Peninsula are one people. Many believe they could recreate the Ummayad or Abbasi Empire.

Q: You would have these things with Qadhafi signing up Tunisia. All these countries have had these announcements.

MARTHINSEN: Qadhafi originally thought that he was going to bring Libya into a fruitful marriage with Egypt.

Q: This has been something around, but... Yemen was in at one point?

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes, definitely. That's why there used to be 3 stars on the UAR flag.

Q: That was the United Arab Republic: Egypt, Yemen, and Syria.How did we view the Baath Party when you arrived there?

MARTHINSEN: Askance because it was socialist. The Baath favored the nationalization of the means of production and all that other good stuff that the Labour Party used to stand for in Britain.

Q: Did we have contacts with the Baath Party or did we view it as inconsequential?

MARTHINSEN: No serious contacts to my knowledge. I never heard my military colleaguewe had several attachetalk about their contacts with Baathi representatives or indeed with any of the groups within the army. Syria had gone through a period of time when there was one military coup after another as various factions gained or lost power. When the Baathis came that ended. Finally Hafiz Al-Asad took power.

Q: But that was after your time.

MARTHINSEN: Yes. He was commander of the air force and supported the Baath at first He didn't emerge as dictator-president at that time.

Q: When did you leave in '67?

MARTHINSEN: We left as the Israelis were shooting down Syrian jets just south of Damascus. I had orders to succeed Ed Springer as American consul in Port Said. Meanwhile, interesting things occurred in the Middle East. While we were on home leave,

the Six Day War occurred. We watched in on TV. That changed the complexion of things not the least for American diplomatic assignments. The consulate in Port Said was burned to the ground. Fortunately, Springer was a canny old friend. He had our recently arrived household effects, including all the kids' toys and beds and everything, moved out of the consulate's warehouse. Thus we emerged from that calamitous period in Egypt with our household effects totally intact. PER said, “You can either come here and walk the corridors or go on TDY to USIA which is manning the American pavilion in Expo '67 in Montreal. We both agreed that it would be far more fun to spend some time in Montreal rather than down to DC with our two boys.

Q: Relations were settled with a number of Arab countries. The State Department was crawling with Arabists and others who had no jobs.

MARTHINSEN: Absolutely. That's why we went to Montreal. We spent from late June until October 5th Quebec.

Q: I'd like to talk about that and then we'll close this session. The precipitation of the Six Day War was Nasser demanding the UN withdraw troops from the Straits of Tiran. What had happened before? Why were the Israelis shooting at Syrian planes?

MARTHINSEN: Because the two countries were skirmishing on the cease fire line. Syria was supportive of the Palestinians and Israel was seeking to seize land in the Golan

Q: But this was not part of the actual war. This happened while you were there before the war.

MARTHINSEN: Yes. The UN brokered a cease-fire between Egypt and Israel. Whether that had taken effect or not, I can't remember. But in any event, the Liberty was a ship sailing off the coast of Syria and Palestine/Israel trying to discover what the Israelis were up to vis-a-vis Syria. What they intended was a blitzkrieg. They shifted armor from Sinai north to the Golan and proceeded to not only try to sink our eavesdropping ship but also to

knock the stuffing out of the Syrian forces that were defending the Heights. But I had left Damascus by that time.

Q: You had gone then.

MARTHINSEN: Yes. My timing was right on. Ambassador Smythe and his staff had a hellish exit from Syria when relations were broken. When I turned up next in the saga, it was as a member of the U.S. interests section of the Spanish Embassy in Cairo.

Q: What were you doing in Montreal?

MARTHINSEN: I was handling public relations—actually a tour guide for White House, USIPs, senators, House of Representatives, and an array of state government officials plus assorted realtors, automobile dealers, etc. A lot of interesting and nice people turned up, jumped the line, and were given a quick tour of our pavilion and escorted to see other pavilions comprising the quite spectacular Exposition. So I had to arrive very early in the morning and leave very late at night to play tour guide for an army of visitors to Montreal. We enjoyed our life in that beautiful city. We were there when De Gaulle visited and ended his speech to the Qu#b#cois: “Vive le Quebec! Vive le Quebec libre!”

Q: De Gaulle was disinvited to come to Ottawa after that.

MARTHINSEN: I dare say.

Q: Independence with Quebec, who knows where it will be. It reached a peak and now it's died down quite a bit.

MARTHINSEN: But the emotional appeal is still there. That's something I learned. I expect the increased emphasis on bilingualism together with the exodus of many English speaking Canadians from Montreal and other cities led to the return of calm. I wouldn't be surprised if over time the pressure for independence should revive.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop. We'll pick this up in 1968. Where did you go?

MARTHINSEN: I went to Cairo as a member of the Spanish embassy US interests section.

***

Q: Today is December 3, 2003. You're off to Cairo in '68. You were there until when?

MARTHINSEN: '69.

Q: Could you talk about how our interests section worked at the time? Who was there? What were the issues?

MARTHINSEN: There were no serious issues apart from the issue of peace in the Middle East. Contacts were relatively limited. I worked closely with several Egyptians, mostly with Under Secretary for Economic Affairs, Hamed El Sayegh. Don Bergus, the head of the interests section, had contacts with several members of the RCC.

Q: What was the RCC?

MARTHINSEN: The Revolutionary Command Council. I think the council may still today be a formal part of the Egyptian governmental structure.

We were nominally part of the Spanish Embassy but we functioned as a miniature embassy. The Spaniards were ideal protectors.

Q: How big were you?

MARTHINSEN: We were about 6 or 7 officers plus communications and secretarial staff. Don Bergus was the head of the interests section. Bill Brownell comprised the political section. George Walsh was the consular section. Gordon Brown was my number two in the economic/commercial section.Q: What was your job?

MARTHINSEN: Economic/Commercial affairs.

Q: Were we doing much commercially with Egypt?

MARTHINSEN: No. Cairo didn't have any money to buy anything and thus there was no great effort to sell. There were a few importers of things like Kent cigarettes who were doing a good business. But the rest of whatever business was going on was taken care of without any intervention, involvement, or knowledge of the USINT.

Q: What did we do economically?

MARTHINSEN: That kind of limited business that was going on. American firms had been supplying Egypt for many years; there were established relationships and representation. Economically we kept track of Soviet aid programs and monitored Cairo-Moscow ties.

Q: Did the Egyptians or the United States interfere with these normal transactions?

MARTHINSEN: No, not that I can recall. Phillips Petroleum was actively exploring for oil in the western desert, USINT, but we didn't get involved at all.

Q: Did the US have any sort of residual investments or government to government type things that we were concerned about?

MARTHINSEN: Apart from ideal currency-financed projects, not that I can remember.

Q: How did you find generally being in Egypt at that time? Was there much animosity towards the US?MARTHINSEN: No. I never encountered any instance or heard of any instance of animosity. As is true throughout the Middle East, most Egyptians hold positive views of the United States, though not of U.S. foreign policy.

Q: There had been the story that American planes had launched the attack that wiped out the Egyptian air force in the '67 war. Was that still around?

MARTHINSEN: That was generally accepted as true by most Egyptians and more than a few non-Egyptians. After all, most of the arms that the Israelis possessed and possess today were U.S.-manufactured.

Q: Actually, at that time, '67, most of the air force was French. It wasn't until after the '67 war that the great American influx of arms came. Was the government contact kind of shut out to you all?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. The planes were French as were some Naval craft, armor and artillery, I believe, were from the United States.

Q: In a way, did you feel you were in a holding action there?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, that's a good way to put it. We were hoping for full restoration of relations between the two countries.

Q: How about some of the police authorities? Were they following you and giving you a rough time?

MARTHINSEN: It was not at all as intensive a surveillance as occurred in Syria. No, I was never aware of being followed, neither I nor any of my colleagues was ever harassed by local authorities.

Q: What were you observing about the role of the Soviets there?

MARTHINSEN: The Soviets were cocks of the walk, at least on the governmental level. I don't think the Soviets made a big hit with Egyptian shopkeepers and students.

Q: They probably didn't have the money.

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: Were we concerned that the Soviets were dominating Egypt at that time?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, that was a common impression. Washington was very nervous about the USSR's influence. We were busily competing with the Soviets at that time.

Q: Nasser was the president at that time. What was our feeling towards him?

MARTHINSEN: He was not at all fond of our favored prot#g# in the Middle East. And because any “enemy” of the Israelis would be someone on whom we would confer the title “hostile,” we could restrain our enthusiasm for Nasser. But in daily life in USINT and as temporary inhabitants of Cairo, we were not aware of any anti-Nasserism.

Q: How about with the reports going in? Did the Near East Bureau weigh in? Were they making demands? Or was there no great pressure put on you to do this or that?

MARTHINSEN: The latter was the case. All realized that we had to wait until other developments occurred that would permit a more extensive relationship.

Q: Were there any developments that were particularly noteworthy?

MARTHINSEN: No, not that I can remember.

Q: There's nothing nicer than a nice quiet time. In '69, whither?

MARTHINSEN: I was called back to the Department to become the staff assistant to the Assistant Secretary for NEA, Joe Sisco.

Q: Joe Sisco was a phenomenon. How long were you working for him?

MARTHINSEN: From '69 to '70.

Q: How did you find working for him?

MARTHINSEN: You had to stay alert. He is very bright, but he could be described as gruff and demanding. Even so, we got along well.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relationship of Sisco with the Secretary?

MARTHINSEN: No, I got no feel for that. Everything went along reasonably smoothly.

Q: Was Sisco's attention pretty well focused on the Arab-Israeli problem?

MARTHINSEN: NEA encompassed South Asia as well. Maybe he focused 2/3 on Arab-Israel matters and the other 1/3 on South Asian affairs.

Q: Also, Greece and Turkey were included in that.

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: Did the Greek colonels situation intrude at all?

MARTHINSEN: Not in a serious way.

Q: Did you get any feel for the relationship between Sisco and Kissinger, who was at that point National Security Advisor?

MARTHINSEN: It was a good relationship, very close and very cooperative.

Q: They were great players in the political game.

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: With Sisco, did you know how he worked with the Department?

MARTHINSEN: No, not really. Though I was in the office all the time, he rarely shared with me or anyone else what occurred in his meetings with the Secretary or at the NSC or elsewhere.

Q: I guess the term was, he played his cards very close to his chest.

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: This was part of his operating style.

MARTHINSEN: I think so.

Q: Within NEA, was there a tilt towards Israel as opposed to towards the Arab world or the reverse?

MARTHINSEN: A curious recollection is that IAI (Israel and Arab-Israeli Affairs) was almost like a competing element within the bureau as opposed to EGYC the Egyptian, Arab States North (ARN) and Arab Peninsula Affairs. I suppose that reflects the clientitis which so frequently occurs in our business; a tendency to adopt the key aims of the states with whom one is working. But that's about it; it was containable. Personal relationships were always very good.

Q: After about a year working with Sisco, where did you go?

MARTHINSEN: I went to Tripoli, Libya. In September of '69, Qadhafi's coup brought down the Idrisid monarchy and yet another RCC was in business. My family and I arrived in early summer of '70.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MARTHINSEN: Joseph Palmer II.

Q: What was the situation there?

MARTHINSEN: Creepy. The Libyans were not sophisticated or used to dealing with other powers according to international norms. Their pool of linguistically talented personnel and experts in economic, political, and even military affairs was small. There were a few key civilian players in the government. All Libyans, whether civilians or military were suspicious of the United States for having been a patron of the defunct monarchy as well as a patron of Israel. Even American business interests, especially in the oil industry, were distrusted by the very xenophobic RCC. It was a strange situation. The ambassador made repeated efforts to reassure Qadhafi and Jalud and the other figures in the Libyan RCC that we accepted the new government and harbored no ulterior motives in our relationship. We wanted to have a reasonable, productive relationship with the Libyans in all sectors. But it was a very hard sell; the suspicion of us was extraordinary.

Q: What was your job?

MARTHINSEN: I was the senior political officer.

Q: Could you get out and around?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, we could all get out and about. Few places were out of bounds. We could travel throughout the country and did. Relations with the Libyan government were limited pretty much to Qadhafi's headquarters at Aziziya Barracks and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Libya's Secretary General of Foreign Affairs, Mansur Al-Kikhiya, was a pivotal contact.

Q: Had we left Wheelus Air Base by this time?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. By the time Kate and I arrived in Tripoli, Wheelus had been closed and all U.S. uniformed personnel had departed. We were still cleaning up what was left in the commissary and things like that.

Q: Could you talk to Libyans or was this a problem?

MARTHINSEN: We had contacts but they were limited, in part because Libyans had been treated rather badly by outside ruling powers, particularly the Ottomans and the Italians. Libyans lacked self-confidence and any sense of nationhood. Most of our contacts were in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Q: What were you interested in as a political officer, signs of dissent?

MARTHINSEN: The big question was what direction would Libya take. Qadhafi saw himself as the son of and probably as the heir to Gamal Abdul Nasser. Shortly after we arrived, in October of '70, Nasser died. The Libyans expressed feelings of despair because the clarion voice of Arab nationalism had been stilled. I have rarely seen such widespread outpouring of sentiment. There were processions of average Libyans marching for hours through the streets of Tripoli.

Q: How were relations between Libya and Egypt at the time?

MARTHINSEN: They were very good at least at the Qadhafi-Nasser levels. And there was much talk of reviving the UAR. The Libyans saw themselves as virtually destined to become members of an expanded United Arab Republic. There is a story to be told about why it never happened. Certainly the sentiment in the street was in favor. I presume it would be that the big difference would have been an economic difference. If you take on the Egyptians as your countrymen, you're going to have to watch your oil-rich pocket very carefully.

Q: Yes. It didn't work very well with the Syrians.

MARTHINSEN: No.

Q: A lot of Egyptians came over to Syria and were not welcomed.

MARTHINSEN: That's right. Well, they had more Egyptians than they had jobs.

Q: This was one of their major exports.

Did Libya have people from the better educated elements of the Arab world, Egypt and Palestine, staffing much of their...

MARTHINSEN: Yes, in particular in the education ministry and the university campuses in Tripoli, and Benghazi. It was very heavily staffed by Egyptians and Palestinians.

Q: How did we view the Libyan relationship with the Soviet Union and the East Bloc?

MARTHINSEN: Well, our country then was totally fixated with the USS. Any Soviet sales, appearances by delegations, any suggestion of Soviet Russian influence was viewed as a setback to the United States.

Q: Were there a lot of Soviet types running around Libya?

MARTHINSEN: No, but that probably is more a reflection of the lack of self-confidence and the xenophobia which were characteristic of Libyan society, particularly among the high-ranking members of the regime. Libyans were almost afraid they were going to be taken to the cleaners.

Q: How about oil developments? Was this going on despite the politics?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, it was.

Q: Including Americans?

MARTHINSEN: Oh, yes.

Q: Were we having trouble with the assistance, Arabic in the passports and that sort of thing?

MARTHINSEN: That brought me to one of the points of my Foreign Service career that was certainly disturbing. It involved good news and bad news. Qadhafi decided that Arabic was as much an international language as English, Russian, Chinese, and French, and therefore all foreigners visiting or going to Libya had to have their passports translated into Arabic. Initially the reaction of particularly the Western countries was, “Oh, forget it. No way.” For a while, that worked. And then on a weekend, he ordered that the regulation be enforced. All travelers were denied entry or exit if they had passports that were not translated into Arabic. Quite by coincidence, one of the members of the embassy was off in Tunisia that weekend. So, he was stuck abroad. I was kind of point man in seeking a solution to this particular problem. We devised several schemes to try and circumvent the difficulties. We arranged for our colleague to fly to France and to get on a flight to Tripoli carrying the French ambassador, who had been on leave, and several French peddlers of fighter aircraft. We thought surely if our colleague is arriving on the same plane (and the French had told us that they weren't translating their passports into Arabic; they would do what the UN required and nothing more) we could point out the difference in treatment accorded the French Ambassador and his team and our colleague. And then we played with that strategy a little bit and decided to delay matters until that flight left; our colleague would at least be on the ground. It didn't work. Finally, they got rough. I had been annoying them by pointing out these discrepancies in their behavior towards the French and the American.

Q: They had let the French in?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, the French were admitted with no problem that we were aware of. I was there with another colleague and suggested he get out of there because I thought things could get nasty. Then they did. A Qadhafi relative who was the head of the police at the airport and finally grew vexed with my delaying tactic and said, “Okay, you're out

of here. You will leave on the same plane." I pointed out that I had not intended to travel and didn't have my passport. He had me put on the plane by force. Two military policemen grabbed my arms and walked me onto the aircraft and into a seat on the plane. So, I called the steward and said, "I think the pilot should know that if I should take off in this aircraft (the next stop was Valetta, Malta), goodness knows what would happen. I have no passport and would be undocumented." The pilot said, "Forget it. I can't take someone who doesn't have his documents in order." My sole satisfaction on that occasion was that I was able to descend from the aircraft and look Qadhafi's relative in the eye and gesture that I was back here in Tripoli." A colleague and friend, Hal Josif, was charg#. I went in to report to Hal on the developments and concluded, "I think we can expect a PNG letter pretty quickly from our Libyan friends." My recollection is that it was that very same evening—it was unusual for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to act that quickly—the note PNGing me arrived. I left Libya two days later. My family followed later.

Q: That was when?

MARTHINSEN: 1973. The good news was that I had been selected earlier to attend the National War College. We had home leave and we went back for an additional 2 years in Tripoli. If I hadn't been PNG'd, then I couldn't have attended the War College. So, as it worked out, I did.

Q: So you went to the War College from '73 to '74?

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: How did you find it?

MARTHINSEN: Well, war college. It was very interesting to be dealing with military officers who have a rather different approach to international relationships.

Q: There must have been a lot of attention paid to the October war, the '73 war, between Israel and the Egyptians and Syrians?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. That has been so in recent history; you can always rely on the Arab-Israeli dispute to enliven the scene.

Q: You got out in '74. Where did you go?

MARTHINSEN: After the war college I went back to the Department to Personnel. I was NEA assignments chief for 2 years.

Q: That would be '74 to '76. How did that work?

MARTHINSEN: At that time a major policy thrust was to combat clientitis via the GLOP. Scuttlebutt in the Department was that Secretary Kissinger had been somewhere in Mexico and an FSO had said, “We” when he really meant “the Mexicans.” Kissinger's concerns about clientitis was refined by Personnel into a policy of assigning FSOs to geographic area outside their areas outside their areas of specialization. This was, in my view, a tremendous waste of resources . Officers study a language, perhaps a difficult language for a long period of time. The more one is immersed in such a language, the more one becomes skilled in it.

Q: How did we deal with women Foreign Service officers in the more hostile Arab world? Was this a problem?

MARTHINSEN: It wasn't a real problem. The problem was finding an officer who had the requisite language skills and professional experience to take a given position. We were making great efforts to assign more and more females. So much so that I can remember chatting with friends and agreeing to be a minority female was the key to success in the Foreign Service. The assignments did proceed and females were perhaps first assigned to

Kuwait. Women had been assigned previously to Egypt, Syria and Jordan. The peninsula was a different kettle of fish.

Q: Was there a problem in Personnel in assigning officers to Israel? Did that almost preclude them from serving in Arab states later on?

MARTHINSEN: No. In Personnel, we often thought, why would anyone, say a Jewish officer, want to serve in Saudi Arabia? Well, presumably because it's there and you want to try it. So, our attitude was, “It's your funeral if you want to go. God knows when you're going to run into a loony.”

Q: We're at '76. Where did you go?

MARTHINSEN: I was assigned to Political-Military Affairs temporarily covering a position for which another FSO had been selected but hadn't arrived. Les Gelb was the PM director at that time.

Q: That was a pretty dynamic bureau at that time, wasn't it?

MARTHINSEN: NEA was always my home bureau and I felt most at home there. While PM was pretty dynamic, it couldn't compare with NEA where, if things are calm right now, don't worry; It's going to change.

Q: What were you doing in PM?

MARTHINSEN: I was just watching over the ship for that time.

Q: There wasn't much of particular note during your time there. You were there for how long?

MARTHINSEN: Less than a year.

Q: And then where did you go? We're moving on to '77.

MARTHINSEN: I went back to NEA as country director for Egyptian affairs.

Q: This would be '77. That must have been an interesting time. That was when things were beginning to break loose with Sadat going to Israel and Camp David.

MARTHINSEN: Yes, they were exciting days.

Q: You were doing that until when?

MARTHINSEN: '80. It was an exciting time. Of course, whenever major events, such as Sadat's initiative occur, business quickly escalates up to the assistant secretarial level and even secretarial level. So, I was backstopping President Carter's efforts to seek peace in the Middle East.

Q: Roy Atherton was assistant secretary.

MARTHINSEN: That's right.

Q: When you arrived there, how were we initially evaluating Anwar Sadat?

MARTHINSEN: It's hard to separate jokes about and by Egyptians from the reality. The assessment was that he was no Gamal Abdel Nasser. Certainly he was more of a realist than Nasser had been. He certainly proved his mettle in the power struggle with Ali Sabri in Cairo. He established himself as the president and stayed in that position until he was murdered by the Muslim loonies. Anyone who knew him or the people around him had to be favorably impressed. He was more pragmatic and less doctrinaire than Gamal had been and certainly he opened the door to peace.

Q: During this time with Sadat going to Jerusalem, was this exciting?

MARTHINSEN: Oh, very much so. There was a distinct possibility that there would be action. People were talking about solving a problem that had been around for 50 years. My entire life had been spent in a field that was dominated by the Arab-Israeli dispute. Anyone who had served in the area and knew something of the countries involved dreamt an end to the killing and bombing and propaganda could occur. We hoped that a mite of justice for the Palestinians could be found. Yes, it was a very exciting time.

Q: Did you get involved in the Camp David process?

MARTHINSEN: I didn't go to Camp David. That was at the assistant secretary and deputy assistant secretary level and the level of the Secretary himself and the White House. No, they didn't have room for me at the inn.

Q: But were you involved in...

MARTHINSEN: Backstopping, carrying position papers, evaluating proposed courses of action. But the negotiations were all handled by the principals. Of course, everything was top secret.

Q: How did you feel about the outcome of Camp David?

MARTHINSEN: We thought that a great weight had been raised from our shoulders, though that proved to be more a hope than a fact. God knows Egypt needed relief from the burdens of war and preparation for war that had dominated Egyptian society for so many years. And they had so much more to do. There were too many Egyptians. The Nile Valley was awash with people, as it is today. They had been preoccupied with the Israel struggle and by inter-Arab rivalries and alliances and movements towards unity and, inescapably, facts of disunity. We hoped that that was the beginning of better times.

Q: Towards the end, about 1980, did you see it still in a very positive sense?

MARTHINSEN: So far as Egypt was concerned, yes. I think that the phased stage by stage withdrawal of occupying forces from Sinai and the restoration of Egyptian sovereignty served to demilitarized Sinai; that provided the basis for a real relationship between Egypt and Israel. Who knows how that will work out. This is one international agreement that has to be extended to include all of the parties before you can say, “now the situation is under control.” As we have seen, the dispute affects countries far afield, in the Arab Peninsula states, to Iraq, to northern Africa, etc. Indeed not only the Arab world, but the Muslim world is involved, as in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Indonesia.

Q: In 1980, where did you go?

MARTHINSEN: I was named ambassador to Qatar. When the offer was made to me, I wasted no time accepting. I recalled a remark made by Napoleon to his soldiers: “Every one of you could have a baton in your knapsack.” I thought, even if it's a tiny baton, it's better than none. I went through the Senate hearings and was off for Doha.

Q: You were in Doha from when to when?

MARTHINSEN: '80 to '83.

Q: What was Doha like when you got there?

MARTHINSEN: Recently I saw some literature put out by the Qatar Ministry of Information featuring pictures of Doha today. When we were there, Doha was modernizing, but still more picturesque. The ruler is the son of the Sheikh who ruled when we were there. He has transformed Qatar. The Sheikh has developed an “education city” focused on the expanded university. Women participate in municipal elections. There's much talk about a parliament. All these things were unknown in my day. Breathtaking developments in this tiny, but very nice, country. Today one sees ads for the Sheraton Hotel on the beach,

inviting visitors to have a cocktail near the pool—that is a staggering change. Qatar's winter sunshine offers an escape for Europeans particularly.

Q: When you were there, what was your impression of Sheikh Khalifa?

MARTHINSEN: Khalifa bin Hamed was the ruler; Hamed bin Khalifa was his heir.

Q: What was your impression of the sheikh?

MARTHINSEN: I thought he was a very straightforward, an ill-educated but honest man who had thrust upon him many responsibilities that ordinarily ministerial colleagues could shoulder. But his ministers were all members of the ruling family or were related to the family. They were rarely educated. The current ruler was educated at Sandhurst.

Q: What were American interests in Doha? You were there from when to when?

MARTHINSEN: '80 until '83. Our interests involved oil exploration and development, particularly in the Dukkan. The most interesting development that came up at that time was the discovery and delimiting the outlines of what was called the North Shore gas field offshore between Qatar and Iran. It is among the largest natural gas fields in the world.

Q: At this time when you were there, we had this turmoil in Iran, but Iran was the 300 pound gorilla to the north. We didn't have relations with Iran at that time. How did the Qatar-Iranian relationship work out?

MARTHINSEN: I would say the Qataris wanted most to be noticed. They didn't want any outside power meddling in their neighborhood. Like most Arabs, Qataris are professional Muslims, akin to the professional Christians of our country, people who see everything from a religious perspective. However, Sheikh Khalifa could contain his enthusiasm for the turbaned mullahs.

Q: Had the Qataris reached an agreement with the Iranians over this natural gas field?

MARTHINSEN: They had not been negotiating with the Iranians. I frankly don't know whether they have reached an agreement or not.

Q: I think they have. I've been interviewing Pat Theros, who was later ambassador in rather recent years to Qatar.

MARTHINSEN: They must have reached it on a businesslike basis.

Q: They did. It's not a contentious issue.

How were relations with the Saudis?

MARTHINSEN: At least on the surface relations were quite good. There was a sense of solidarity on issues that affected the Peninsula. I think that the Qataris were conscious of the fact that they were the second Wahhabi power in the world. The first one was that gorilla, Saudi Arabia, right next door. So, love-hate would be a bit strong. Love-distrust, love-fear possibly...

Q: Were there any disputes while you were there?

MARTHINSEN: No. There were disputes, as there had been for some time, between Qatar and Bahrain over Hawar Island off the northwestern coast of Qatar. The ruling family of Bahrain had originally in power in Qatar. At some juncture they decided that they would take the water-rich island of Bahrain and they'd leave behind the Al Thanis as their viceroys. The Bahrainis enjoyed the water and the Al Thanis succeeded to the oil of Qatar.

Q: How about with the United Arab Emirates [UAE] Sharjah, Fujairah, Dubai?

MARTHINSEN: There too the issue of the 800 pound gorilla comes in; Saudi influence was paramount. There had always been border disputes in the Peninsula, whether it's the

Buraimi Oasis or Asia or between the Yemens, etc. A dispute over the border between and among Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE sputtered along and was somehow resolved.

Q: Was Das island a problem at that time?

MARTHINSEN: No, not a serious one.

Q: Who was exploring for oil?

MARTHINSEN: Qatar Petroleum had contracts with western firms such as BP.

Q: At the time you were there, it was the Qatar Oil Company?

MARTHINSEN: Yes, Qatar Petroleum was the major player.

Q: They had been running the oil business... I was a vice consul in Dhahran in '58 to '60. Qatar and the UAE and Bahrain were part of our consular...

MARTHINSEN: So you made it to Doha, too.

Q: Oh, yes. Then the big deal was, they had a clock tower. The clock tower was the major item in Doha.

MARTHINSEN: Yes, and still was in the time. It featured on all their postcards. But now Doha boats soaring hotels and business complexes and shopping malls.

Q: Were there any major American initiatives or interests in Qatar at that time?

MARTHINSEN: No, not really. We kind of focused more on cultural cooperation with the Qataris. A significant number of the Qatar's young men and even young women were being sent the U.S. universities.

Q: Had the Iran-Iraq War started?

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: What was the feeling there?

MARTHINSEN: “A fellow Arab against a non-Arab, a Muslim against a non-Muslim.”

Q: In this case you're saying that...

MARTHINSEN: Two Muslim powers were at war. Iraq is Arab, so Qatar's sympathies were with Iraq.

Q: Was there a feeling of threat from Iran at the time?

MARTHINSEN: Not really, though Tehran's intentions were suspect. The war was basically over the Shatt el Arab, which is a body of water between the Gulf and the Tigris-Euphrates River. The dispute arose in the days when the Brits were in charge in Tehran and in Baghdad and earlier. The Talveg—the center of the navigation channel—is the usually accepted boundary between the two states. For whatever reason, Baghdad believed that its sovereignty extended to the Iranian bank of the Shatt el Arab and the Iranians, quite naturally, asserted otherwise. But the dispute had been around as an issue since Hector was a pup. Iraq thought that Iran had been weakened by the revolution and attacked. Qatari sympathies were with their fellow Arabs. Yes, there were some passing threats. As for example, when the Iranians took over and/or reasserted Iranian sovereignty over two islands off the UAE, Abu Musa and Tunbs. That made the hair stand up on Qatari necks.

Q: Did you find that our policy at the time that you were ambassador there... This was the embassy takeover and the revolution in Iran. It was so recent. Were we fully supporting Iraq?

MARTHINSEN: I was instructed and did assure the Qataris that we were sympathetic to the efforts of the Iraqis.

Q: Were there any developments during the time you were there, until '83... The tanker war hadn't started yet, had it?

MARTHINSEN: No, that was afterwards.

Q: Where did you go in '83?

MARTHINSEN: On my sunset cruise. I was chosen to be a diplomat in residence. Among the campus choices dangled before me was The University of Pittsburgh. My brothers and their families were in the Pittsburgh area and my sister and her family lived in Erie. The idea of living in western Pennsylvania was very appealing. It was only after I said I'd choose Pitt that I learned they wanted me to join the faculty of Semester at Sea. Kate and I and one of our sons flew to the West Coast and drove up to Seattle, where we boarded the SS Universe to Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Ceylon, India, Egypt, and Morocco. We ended up in Florida in time to spend Christmas with Kate's parents who had retired there. After a lovely holiday, we went back to Pitt where I taught Middle East History and Political Science at the graduate school.

Q: How did you find the students?

MARTHINSEN: Well, by the time they got into the kind of class I was teaching, they were pretty serious students. I was very impressed.

Q: And how long did you do that?

MARTHINSEN: Just for the half a year. Then I received my final FS assignment and that was to the Army War College at Carlisle, where I was named DCIA (Deputy Commandant for International Affairs).

Q: How long did you do that?

MARTHINSEN: I did that for 3 years until my retirement.

Q: What year did you retire?

MARTHINSEN: 1987.

Q: What was your impression of the officers you were dealing with at the Army War College?

MARTHINSEN: Again, because they were self-selected and then chosen for the AWC, they represented the cream of the officer corps and senior civil service. I think they were very good, very keenly interested in the subject matter, whatever it was, and pretty gung ho.

Q: I think this is a good place to stop.

MARTHINSEN: Yes.

Q: You're settled now in Carlisle?

MARTHINSEN: Yes. When the retirement bell started ringing, Kate and I knew we wanted to be on the East Coast. At the time, both our sons were living in the Washington area. We knew we wanted to be close enough that we could get to them easily. We checked out Charlottesville, Harrisburg, Leesburg, all the way down to Ashville. We knew we didn't want to retire in Florida, and we couldn't find anything that really attracted us in the Carolinas or in Virginia. By then, we had lived 3 years in Carlisle and we had many friends, knew our way around, knew all the restaurants, and so we agreed one day while driving home from Winchester that we would stay in Carlisle. It's a pretty little town with an historic district that goes back to the mid-1700s. We got a newer house. It was built in 1874. As all kids will do, our's moved off, one to Philadelphia and now Rochester, New York, and the

other to Scottsdale and now Tampa. They're the ones who have to put up with our visits in season, as it were.

Q: Okay. Charles, thank you very much.

End of interview